

CATHOLIC WORSHIP

A Lecture, to be given in the Church of S. Mary the Virgin,

New York City,

Wednesday evening, January 9,

1935

by

The Rev. Franklin Joiner, D.D.

Rector of S. Clement's Church, Phila.

CATHOLIC WORSHIP.

Since Worship, if it is true worship and sincere, is the expression of love, I suppose we may paraphrase our Blessed Lord's familiar commandment and say: Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. For if we are to worship aright, we must believe aright; if we believe aright, that belief must transform our lives; and when our lives are transformed, then we shall be bound to express our belief and the new life that is in us, by witnessing and demonstrating in outward acts what we believe in mind and soul.

So Catholic Worship must mean, first of all, belief in the Catholic Faith; then the practice of the Catholic Life; and finally our part in what is generally meant when we use the word Worship, the liturgical action of the Church.

In the Athanasian Creed we say: "This is the Catholic Faith, that we worship the Trinity in Unity." Let us then consider first of all, our faith in the Catholic Creeds as the expression of our worship. The only authority over our spiritual life must itself be spiritual. It must come from the Holy Spirit, so the religion which has the right to exercise authority and to command our worship is the religion which is taught by the Holy Spirit.

The religion of authority and the religion of the spirit are the same. It is to be seen and experienced in the Church which our Blessed Lord founded, for it was to this Church and this Church only that the Holy Spirit came with power. He did not come as a substitute for Christ. He did not come to ~~atone~~ ^{COMPENSATE} for an absense; he came to ~~create~~ ^{MAINTAIN} a Presence. He makes Christ present in the Church according to Christ's own promise: "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you."

Communion with this Church is necessary for a full participation in the blessings of redemption, for here the human soul has direct access to the divine Saviour--not where the soul chooses or fancies, but where the

Saviour promises and commands." He especially promises his presence in three particulars: in faith and doctrine, for He says, "Go ye forth and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world". Secondly, in worship and sacraments, for He says, "Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them"; and He gives His presence in the union made in Baptism between Himself and the believer, and in the Mass. And thirdly, in government and discipline, for He says, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven"; and to His Apostles He says, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you".

~~Now~~ While it is the duty of the Church to teach the truth, it is and always has been its duty to witness to the old truth, not to invent new truth. The witness of the Church in the first century is embodied mainly in the books of the New Testament. The witness of the Church in the second century and in the third can be found in many important Christian writings, and in the ~~separation~~ ^{DIVISION} made by the Church between the books of the New Testament and a number of forged and legendary books which were then in circulation. We also find an appeal made to the witness of the various ^{LOCAL} Churches which the Apostles had founded, and then during and after the fourth century we ^{have} ~~find~~ the witness of the great ^{ECUMENICAL} councils, ~~of the Church.~~

Christianity very soon attracted the attention of the heathen world, and many inquirers began to take some interest in the life of the Lord Jesus, and some of these honest inquirers found it hard to believe that so holy a person as our Blessed Lord could have a real human nature. ~~To us this seems very strange, but the same difficulty is felt by some Eastern people to-day.~~ ~~So~~ Very early indeed in the history of the Church we find that Catholic Christians had to safeguard the worship of their Divine Lord and Master by repeating again and again the truth that as the Lord Jesus truly rose again from the dead with a real human body, so He truly suffered and truly ate and drank. This is the teaching of the Gospel, and gradually the witness of the

Church to this fundamental truth prevailed.

Then as the Church grew stronger, other men who had been brought up in a heathen atmosphere professed that they were Christians, but wanted to treat our Lord as ~~if~~ ^{THOUGH} he were a demi-god, such as the Mercury worshipped by the Romans. ^{O.B.L.} They said ~~he~~ was not eternal but was made by God to help in the creation of the world. The Bishops of the Church then met together in the great Council of Nicea in 325 and declared in solemn conclave that Christ Jesus is truly God eternal, of one substance with the Father. They declared that the Arians, who held the other view, had ~~no~~ right to worship Jesus Christ if they did not believe in His true ^{DEITY} ~~Divinity~~. They drew up the Nicene Creed which, with some later enrichments, is used through-out the whole of the Catholic Church to this day.

~~XX~~ Other doubts and difficulties about the nature of God, the Holy Trinity, and the Incarnate Son had to be met by similar and later Councils. In 381, at Constantinople, the Bishops of the Catholic Church declared that our Lord had not only a true human body, but also a true human soul, as is plainly taught in the pages of the New Testament. Then the Nestorian heresy was met and refuted by the Council of Ephesus in 431, showing very plainly that there is a difference, great and insuperable, between believing that our Blessed Lord is a human person who gradually became united with God because He was so very good, and the real Christian belief that our Lord is a divine person, who in His great love for us, chose to become human and pass through the same griefs and troubles as ourselves, being "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin".

Once more the true Catholic Worship of the Church was imperiled, when a monk named Eutyches was so anxious to protest against the heresy of the Nestorians that he taught that the human nature of our Lord became changed into his Godhead. He confused the two natures. Now it is plain that if our Lord's human nature was not a real human nature, His example does not really help us. It would be like a screen show in the ^{MOVIES} ~~Cinema~~, where we see people going through and acting out imaginary adventures. The Bishops

of the Church therefore met again at Chalcedon in 451 and declared that we must not divide the two natures of Christ, His Godhead and His manhood, nor must we confuse them.

These four Councils are the most important councils of the Church, although three other great Councils were held before 1054, when the unfortunate quarrel between the Pope of Rome and the Patriarch of Constantinople divided the Church in twain. As we look back upon these Councils, we cannot fail to see how they preserved the Church's faith in the real historic Christ, and safe-guarded for us the worship of the "only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent".

The Church teaches that our Lord had real human feelings, that He had a human reason and a human soul, that He had a human will; but just as we have something deeper, something behind our feeling and our reasoning and our willing, something that we call SELF, so our Lord had a SELF. In us the SELF is human; in Him, the SELF is Divine. Our SELF may, more or less, resemble that of our heavenly Father. His SELF is the perfect eternal expression of the eternal Father.

Of the Father's love begotten,
E'er the worlds began to be,
He is Alpha and Omega,
He the first, the ending, He.

"All the modern conflicts of orthodoxy with infidelity and semi-infidelity prove that if we believe the statements about our Lord in the New Testament to be true and not in opposition to one another, then we must logically believe that the decisions of the great Councils in regard to the person of our Divine Lord are also true." I have devoted special attention to these Councils because their decisions illustrate the truth that the Holy Spirit has enabled the Church to teach and to explain what Christ Jesus was and what he did. Our Blessed Lord has given no different revelation and therefore He has not given any one any right to teach any new strange doctrine or to deny "the faith once for all delivered to the Saints". ~~For example, the Church could never have the right to teach that there are four~~

~~persons in the Godhead, or to deny that the Holy Sacrament of the Altar is the true Body and the true Blood of Jesus Christ, or to say that a man may marry a second time while his first wife is living. On the contrary it is the duty of the Church to witness daily to the divine revelation that God is three in one, to feed her children with the true bread of life and that true cup of salvation, and to maintain the holiness of Christian marriage. "They that worship God, must worship Him in spirit and in truth."~~

If we ask, where is the authentic record of the original doctrines of the Christian faith, the great guide to Catholic Worship, the ancient Fathers of the Church would have replied at once; in the Holy Scriptures. Their religion was founded upon facts, the facts recorded in the New Testament, and tradition meant and still means, the constant maintaining that these facts are facts.

In these few minutes I have tried to summarize a vast quantity of Christian doctrine, but even those who have little time or inclination for theological study can see that what I have said corresponds with experience. The Church's wisdom is therefore justified by the experience of her children. Her authority gives us definite guidance, a clear light. It does not indeed lead us ^{as} ~~like~~ men who are blindfold^{ed}, but if we make it our real rule of life, gladly and intelligently, we shall see in Christ Jesus that light of life which all his faithful people have followed, and other men will see that light in us.

"Star of the East, the horizon adorning,

Guide where our Infant Redeemer is laid."

Do you not agree with me that this is the first and the most important element in our consideration of Catholic Worship?

-----*****-----

Now let us take into consideration the way in which this worship of the Trinity in Unity, this faith in the Church, and its historic Creeds, ^{is} ~~are~~ to take possession of us and transform us, so that we worship God daily and hourly by growing more and more like unto Him.

The Catholic Faith, to one who understands it, is the presentation of Jesus Christ in the fulness of his grace and truth. It is tremendous in its implications, its promises, and its demands. None who realize it can hold it lightly, or remain~~ed~~ unchanged in themselves. "God has given Himself to us irrevocably in Jesus Christ, and the love that embraced us in the mystery of the Incarnation, and redeemed us on Calvary, and brought life and immor~~at~~lity to light for us again by His resurrection from the dead, is still alive and available for us in the Mysteries of the Catholic Church."

The life and work and presence of Jesus Christ with us now in His Church by the power of the Holy Spirit, are one with His life and work and presence in the days of His flesh. They are its fruit and its application. Our eyes may often be blinded, our prejudices may mis-lead us, our pride may hold us fast, or our cowardice betray us, but, as we begin to see our Blessed Lord more clearly, in His Church and in His Sacraments, in His word and in the Faith taught by His Apostles and their successors, in the worship of the Altar, in the lives of His Saints, in the practice of Catholic devotion, and in the rules of Christian conduct, we learn and find strength to give ourselves to Him, to seek His gifts, to bind ourselves to His service, and to be renewed daily by His grace. And the revelation of God in Christ is not for ourselves only; we soon discover a new responsibility for others. The Catholic Faith holds, as it were in trust for the world, the way of life for all and the manifestation of love to all. In Christ Jesus every individual may have hope and find salvation. In Christ Jesus all life is sanctified, and finds a new power of unity, of fellow-ship, of self-sacrificing service. What manner of men must they be who profess this Faith? If we would extend it, we must live by it. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

The sequence of thought that I am trying to follow out is this; Faith means not merely belief, but belief leading to active, participating trust in God, through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is only in so far as we are acting in a co-operative trust in Christ and with Him that He can control our inmost selves and raise us to new powers. This active trust will affect both our thoughts and our actions. In the region of thought we shall believe all that Christ means us to believe. As soon as we are once convinced that He means us to believe anything, if we trust Him, we shall believe it. And this trust will affect our actions. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you". It goes without saying that we shall seek to obey the moral law which He has given us, and strive to imitate the example of His most perfect life.

But there are three further duties which an active faith and a spirit of true worship will impose. The first of these is prayer. It is prayer which opens the way for God to give us His Holy Spirit, the best gift He has to bestow. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? "In everything let your wants be made known unto God". "Pray without ceasing".

The second duty will be to make use of the Sacraments which our Lord Christ has ordained. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" "Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you". ~~"And they continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."~~

And the third duty will be to take our place, humble though it may be, as learners in the Church, because He left the Church to represent Him to the end of time. "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." "When thou art converted, strengthen the brethren".

So the second stage in our consideration of Catholic Worship shows us that we must translate the Catholic Faith into Catholic lives and living.

-----***-----

And now, if it is not too homiletical an expression for a lecture, may I say lastly? Let us consider the outward and more formal expression of our faith in God and our own personal supernatural life in Him, through the outward and visible signs of liturgical worship and devotion. This naturally will center about the Mass, for to the Catholic, it is the Mass that matters above all else, and our Faith in God and His power in us finds its outlet at the Altar, and the power that renews our Faith and daily transforms our lives is drawn from it, "the Altar of God, the God of my joy and gladness".

"Just as the impulse to worship comes from the Father who seeks worshippers to worship Him in spirit and in truth, so the true and spiritual ways of worship are not of man's invention, but of God's ordinance, both in the Old Testament and in the New. The duty and the desire of every man should be therefore, to worship God in the most perfect way, not simply to do what may appeal to his personal temperment and liking, nor merely to follow local use and custom, no matter how dearly his fathers may have loved it nor how much he has grown to revere it. If our Blessed Lord enjoined any special act of worship, any mode of worship, we may be sure that this will be the most perfect kind possible, and that its observance is our bounden duty."

The people of God have always worshipped Him in the congregation; that is, in a corporate body: but since the Son of God is come, who gave us the New Covenant in His Blood, the people of God have worshipped Him through Jesus Christ our Lord. This truth lies at the very heart of our Religion as Catholic Christians. It means much more than adding the sacred and familiar formula to the ending of our prayers. "No man", saith our Lord, "cometh unto the Father but by Me". "He has created for us a new and living way, which gives us boldness to enter into the holiest by the Blood of

Jesus, and through His Flesh, which means His sacred human nature". Through Him, as S. Paul says, "We have access by one Spirit unto the Father".

Elsewhere our Lord tells us that, as Jacob saw in his dream the ladder set up on earth whose top reached to Heaven, so we shall see Heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. Again our Lord likens Himself to the door through which His flock may pass. He is the one Mediator between God and man, the medium of all our communication with God who is spirit, and with all the spirit world above us, where angels and archangels and all the company of Heaven laud and magnify His glorious Name. In the Mass we find the most perfect form of worship for this very reason, that in this holy service we draw nigh to God through Jesus Christ our Lord, and this we do, not simply by having Him in our thought and memory, but by His special presence in our midst." He, very God of very God, is present, not only as the Holy Ghost is present by virtue of the unlimited and ubiquitous spiritual presence of ~~the~~ God-head, but in His Flesh and Blood, that is, in His God-united humanity; for Jesus Christ is not spirit alone, but also truly man, dwelling in a body." We draw nigh not only in the spirit of Christ, but through the Body and Blood of Christ. In the Mass we worship God the Father, in the power of the Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Through Him, as through the door, our spirits may pass into the holiest, into the heavenly places, into the presence of our Father which is in heaven. The gate into heaven stands open so that "we may in heart and mind thither ascend"; the veil which hangs between us and the vast unseen world of ~~the~~ spirit becomes not an obstacle but a window; and that veil is His Flesh.

This is why the practice of Eucharistic Worship has so strong a hold on mens' hearts and makes such a powerful appeal to the devout mind. Man, like S. John on the island of Patmos, is conscious of his need to find a way of escape for his spirit into the infinite region where God dwelleth--"from this dull earth to the golden gardens of Paradise". On that side of his

~~nature~~ ^{nature} which is immortal he belongs to heaven, and there alone he can find absolute love and joy and peace. But that region is beyond his sight and above his reach; he needs some ladder of communication such as Jacob saw in his dream; he requires a "door opened in heaven", through which his spirit may pass. Holy Mass provides such a door. It is the typical form of approach to God through Christ. In it we "lift up our hearts unto the Lord".

The reason why the Mass must be our chief act of worship is because our Lord so ~~commanded~~ it to be. If we do not follow His direction we disobey Him. And the Catholic Church has always taught that we should fulfil our obedience by worshipping God in this His appointed way, on every Sunday and every greater holy-day. It is not meant that we should restrict our obedience to only a few occasions. Our own sense of what is right also teaches us that we should sanctify the Lord's Day and the chief festivals, by exercising our joyful privilege, and claiming our place as our Father's children in Christ Jesus, at our Lord's own service. Our Lord says, "Do this"; the Church gives us this rule as to when we should "do this".

If we go back in time to any period of history since the days of the Apostles, we shall find amid all other changes that the Mass was the distinctive Christian service. It is something very ancient, something the same in all essentials, from the days when "they continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the Breaking of Bread and the prayers". It is a witness and guarantee of the continuity of the Catholic Church and her age-long worship of the Father, through the Son, and in the power of the Holy Ghost.

To-day, all over Catholic Christendom, the Altar is the meeting place of Christian people in their worship of God; and more and more we are coming to see that "It is only in those things wherein they are in error that the various divided portions of Christ's Church differ from one another, but that when they hold stedfastly to the original deposit of truth they agree." The more we hold fast to Christ's command, "Do this in remembrance of Me",

the nearer do we bring the day when Christendom shall be re-united ⁱⁿ one body in love.

-----*****-----

Just one more thought, and I am done. I am sure you will be expecting me to say some few words about the Ceremonial of Catholic Worship. ~~es~~ CEREMONIAL IS ~~pecially as~~ the devout expression of our faith and our living trust in the love of God as He is revealed in Jesus Christ, ~~and as~~ That love is extended through all ages in the sacraments of the Church, and especially in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Ceremonial means ~~the~~ ^{at} outward adornment of a function, which helps to express its significance or adds to its impressiveness. It is employed on almost all important occasions and in every department of life. The Army, for instance, makes great use of ceremonial, partly in order to impress upon the world its power and importance, and partly to help secure discipline and uniformity. Ceremonial is also a simple accompaniment of the actions of everyday life. We shake hands, bow, and take off our hats, and we mean these actions to express something that is in our minds. The Church for the same reasons makes considerable use of ceremonial; and in Church, as in the world outside, it is customary to use ceremonial which is based upon ancient tradition. When you attend any Church service you are likely to find ceremonial of some kind employed as a means of teaching and a help to worship, and a method of adding to the impressiveness of a service; ~~that is,~~ ^{AND AS A WAY} ~~in other words,~~ to express words and ideas in actions suited to them, to ~~clothe~~ clothe and adorn the chief services of worship with beauty and dignity, and to enlist the whole person, body as well as soul, in the act of adoring the Creator.

The English Church has never done without ceremonial. For many years before the Oxford Movement her services had, in many places, been formal, cold, and slovenly; and one result of the new life which that Movement infused into her was the ^{RESTORATION} ~~reform~~ of her ceremonial of public worship. If any question on this subject is reasonable, is ^{it} not simply between doing things

in a lifeless and ugly fashion, and doing them in such a way as to appeal to man's sense of beauty and order, and to illustrate the meaning of our actions in the expressive manner which has been evolved by many generations of our Christian forefathers, and is understood by our Catholic brethren scattered through the world? "You will always find that the objections raised against taking thought and care about religious ceremonial are really not aimed at the ceremonial itself, but at the doctrines of the Church which the ceremonial implies." It is natural enough for people who sit loose to Christian revelation, to dislike the Christian methods of conducting worship, and to wish for other substitutes of their own devising. But in our Anglo-Catholic parishes to-day, Catholic ceremonial is a means by which they often attract and enlist in their congregations Church folk whose allegiance has previously been merely formal and unintelligent.

The world with all its pageantry, its impetuous rush of life, its appeal to the things of sight and sense, imposes upon the imagination, and gradually crowds out and over-powers the things of the Spirit. It is for this reason that the Church steps down into the arena and opposes its grandeur, every angle of which speaks of God, to the glamor and attraction of the gilded ceremonial of the world. And so while we love the quiet and the simple atmosphere of the Low Mass in the early hours of the day, and find peace and spiritual refreshment there, yet for our great corporate act of worship, and for the joyous out-pouring of our heart's love to Almighty God, we seek out the Solemn Mass, in the middle of the day, when the Sun at the zenith adds its glory, and here offer our solemn worship, with all the adjuncts of beauty and loveliness, with all the traditional ornaments of the Church that our Catholic forebears have used, ~~xxx~~ all of which ^{is} ~~are~~ a fore-shadowing of that eternal worship of the eternal God in the courts of Heaven.

And let me remind you once more, and this is my final word, that Catholic Worship begins with a right faith in God and a converted life, before any outward form of worship can be acceptable to our Father in Heaven.

~~to~~ We, who to-day are privileged to worship Almighty God in our great parishes, with all the traditional ornaments of Catholic Worship, must not forget that along with this privilege there is imposed upon us a very heavy responsibility. We, who pride ourselves upon the beauty and the dignity of our liturgical worship, must not forget how incumbent upon us it is, to uphold in their complete integrity, the ancient and historic Creeds of Christendom; and to increase, ourselves, in the knowledge and love of God through prayer and Sacrament. Then may we, with true faith and converted lives, strengthen our brethren.

"O, come, let us worship and fall down,

And kneel before the Lord our Maker.

For He is the Lord our God;

And we are ~~the~~ people of His pasture, ~~And~~ the sheep of His hand.

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;

Let the whole earth stand in awe of Him.

For He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth;

And with righteousness to judge the world,

And the peoples with His Truth."